

# 21st Century Skills in West Virginia

PARTNERSHIP FOR  
21ST CENTURY SKILLS

As the world becomes more competitive and complex, our nation's future depends on the education of our young people. West Virginia is determined that students will be ready for the world that awaits them. The West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE), along with the Governor, state lawmakers and key stakeholders, has embraced the six key elements of 21st century learning. Through a systemic approach, the WVDE is implementing a learning model that assures West Virginia students will have the knowledge and skills needed to succeed and prosper today and tomorrow. The West Virginia Board of Education's vision of developing a 21st century school system aligns with Governor Joe Manchin and First Lady Gayle Manchin's efforts through the West Virginia Jobs Cabinet to link educational improvement and economic development in West Virginia.



## 21ST CENTURY SKILLS INITIATIVES

### **1 Frameworks for High Performing 21st Century Classrooms, Schools and School Systems**

Systemic change requires a common vision at each level of the education enterprise. Thus, West Virginia has developed a series of Framework documents to describe the culture, practices and processes that characterize high performing 21st century school districts, schools and classrooms. These Framework documents, used together, help align the local system toward 21st century learning. Furthermore, they serve as a guide to local improvement efforts as superintendents, principals and classroom teachers make decisions about how to best serve the needs of 21st century students.

### **2 Rigorous Content Standards**

To educate students who will be internationally competitive, state education agencies must develop curriculum standards that meet the highest level of international rigor. The WVDE completed a total audit of its Content Standards and Objectives to determine rigor and relevance for the 21st century. With guidance from international experts, state business and educational leaders and members of the P21 Partnership, West Virginia curriculum standards were revised to meet the rigor of national and international measures such as NAEP, ACT, TIMSS and PISA.

### **3 Instructional Guides for Integrating 21st Century Content, Skills and Technology Tools**

Successfully preparing students for the 21st century requires changes in the instructional process. The WVDE believes that teachers should be supported in this effort by providing exemplars of quality instructional models and user-friendly instructional resources. Using the new curriculum standards as a basis, nearly 120 Pre k through grade 12 teachers (representing reading, English/language arts, science, social studies and mathematics) met to develop quality lessons that focus on the use of quality formative classroom assessments built upon performance, products and clearly defined rubrics. As a result of this year-long effort, classroom teachers will be supported with at least four 21st century instruction guides per grade level.

#### **4 Curriculum Standards for 21st Century Learning Skills and Technology Tools**

To operationalize the goals of 21st century learning, the WVDE determined that statewide curriculum standards must be established not only for content but also for teaching learning skills and using 21st century technology tools. Using classroom teachers, higher education representatives and WVDE staff, programmatic standards were written and policy formulated to define the various categories of learning and technology skills that must be part of the instructional focus in every West Virginia classroom.

#### **5 Technology Integration Specialist**

To support the integration of technology into the instructional process, the WVDE designed an intensive professional development process to certify Technology Integration Specialists. After completing 40 hours of training, participants receive certification that allows them to work cooperatively with classroom teachers in the design of instructional processes.

#### **6 West Virginia Institute for 21st Century Leadership**

To successfully implement a systemic focus on 21st century learning, strong leadership is essential. Thus, the WVDE convened a statewide planning committee of regional agency staff, superintendents and principals to design a 21st Century Leadership Institute. The work of this committee resulted in a year-long professional development process designed to build leadership knowledge and skills related to the Frameworks for High Performing 21st Century Elementary, Middle and High Schools. The professional development process includes a 12-day residential experience (summer, spring and fall) and a series of interim electronic and face-to-face professional development sessions. The Institute experience culminates with participants presenting an ePortfolio to their local superintendent as part of their annual evaluation process.

#### **7 Professional Development for WVDE Staff and Key Stakeholders**

To develop knowledgeable statewide leaders and serve as a catalyst for change, the WVDE designed nine days of professional development focused on the urgency for change and the six components of 21st century learning. Convened over a three month period, all WVDE staff, Regional Agency staff, representatives from all institutions of higher education and other key stakeholders met, learned about key 21st century concepts, discussed implications for their respective roles and determined personal and organization changes that should be made to lead 21st century learning in West Virginia

#### **THE PARTNERSHIP FOR 21ST CENTURY SKILLS**

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills is the leading advocacy organization focused on infusing 21st century skills into education. The organization brings together the business community, education leaders and policymakers to define a powerful vision for 21st century education to ensure every child's success as citizens and workers in the 21st century. The Partnership encourages schools, districts and states to advocate for the infusion of 21st century skills into education and provides tools and resources to help facilitate and drive change.